

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 DECEMBER 2010

INTRODUCTION TO ADULT LEARNING SERVICES

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Summary

This item advises Members of the services provided by of the Medway Adult and Community Learning Services (MACLS).

1. Budget and Policy Framework

1.1 MACLS is externally funded and delivers on the policies of the Skills Funding Agency.

2. Background

2.1 At the last meeting of the committee, Members were informed that Adult Learning had been added to the Assistant Director, Organisational Service's remit and as such was now within the terms of reference of Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee rather than Children and Adults Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 It was agreed that the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be briefed on this new area of responsibility before holding the Portfolio Holder to account. This report gives Members an overview of adult learning and the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Services will be held to account for the adult learning, Housing Revenue Account, housing and homelessness, libraries and resource centres and the voluntary sector themes within his portfolio on 27 January 2011.

2.3 Medway Adult and Community Learning Service (MACLS) is an externally funded provider of lifelong learning opportunities for the residents of Medway and occasionally beyond. MACLS is a diverse provider which (unusually for an adult learning service) has funding

streams for qualifications, leisure learning, family learning, workforce and employability skills and commissioned projects.

3. Comparative Performance

3.1 April – August 2009 v. April – August 2010

- Learners participating up by 17.3% (to 6,755)
- Number of enrolments up by 20.6% (to 10,639)
- “New” learners up by 10% (to 2,939)
- Level of public awareness of adult education up by 16% (Apr 2010 v. June 2010) – Quarterly tracker
- 93% of existing customers would consider using MACLS again (Quarterly tracker June 2010)
- 37% of survey audience would consider using MACLS (Quarterly tracker June 2010)

3.2 Other points to note with reference to surveys conducted externally – on 14 October 2010, the results of the first Framework for Excellence Learner Satisfaction Survey results were published. Individual learner satisfaction with MACLS was 88% (note: within the framework which is a survey conducted by Skills Funding Agency a score of 85% + is deemed to be “outstanding”).

3.3 Diversity indicators to note (Apr – Aug 09 v. Apr – Aug 10)

- Male learners up by 10% (to 1,710)
- LDD learners up by 13% (to 879)
- Black and ethnic minority group participation is marginally down on the previous year but still running at 19.5%
- The age group 60+ participation is also marginally down year on year but still running at 22.6% (note: August – Sep 2010 figures for 60+ participation up at 28.7%)
- participation from deprived wards is on average 38-40% but for vocational programmes this jumps to 48-52% indicating that the work supporting employability skills and workforce up-skilling is taking place in the areas where it is most needed.

4. Bringing Lifelong Learning to the Medway Community

4.1 An audit of provision in June 2010 indicated that MACLS is delivering adult learning provision from 72 venues across Medway, working with over 100 local employers to deliver vocational courses to over 400 adults (at Levels 2, 3 and 4).

4.2 A new evening centre start-up piloted at Hundred of Hoo School during the summer term attracted 65 new learners. (By September 2010 this number had doubled to 120) and in August 2010, MACLS signed up to the BBC’s First Click initiative designed to bring ICT skills to older people in the community – the television campaign has just started (October 2010).

5. Partnerships within and beyond the Council

- 5.1 MACLS delivers Level 3 professional qualifications for the fitness industry using the facilities at Medway Park and now undertakes the professional training for school catering staff in partnership with the Feast Centre based at Walderslade School.
- 5.2 The service is also supporting the Youth Service to deliver vocational and other training to its youth workers and took over the operational management of the vocational training programmes for the Council in April including Management NVQs and VRQs, Business Administration and Customer Service.
- 5.3 MACLS is a delivery partner in the Employ Medway Success Project and in the Eco Advantage environmental project.
- 5.4 MACLS took on responsibility for running the Medway College of Social Care with effect from 1 April 2010 and will bring better value for money to its delivery operation. It is also working in partnership with the Library Service to deliver the concept of the Community Hub.
- 5.5 In addition, MACLS is in the process of developing a strategic partnership with the Medway Children's Centres – aiming to have provision in each of the 19 centres by July 2011.
- 5.6 MACLS has developed its own super-user capacity to market workforce development courses through i-share and is also in the process of developing a closer partnership with the Deaf Services Team at the Council. Work with British Sign Language has grown significantly over the last couple of years (see below) and officers would like to develop further services for this community:

2008/2009 - 151 learners (165 enrolments)

2009/2010 - 212 learners (229 enrolments)

2010/2011 - (August 2010 to 18/10/10) 199 learners (211 enrolments)

6. Outcomes for Learners – nominated for excellent work

- 6.1 Three art learners were nominated for City and Guilds Gold medals and two floristry learners were also nominated for Gold Medals. The results of these nominations will be known around December 2010.

7. Financial and legal implications

- 7.1 Public sector funding constraints have already hit the Further Education Sector resulting in a substantial cut in funding. MACLS is addressing this in several ways:
 - continuing cost reductions in operational activity (non-frontline)
 - bidding for additional funding alone and in partnership with other agencies and units of the Council.
 - raising our profile through targeted marketing of courses to employers and community development agencies

- removing parts of the provision from public funding (thereby removing the 30% subsidy) and charging market rates for provision
- 7.2 There are no immediate concerns relating to the budget which should still come out at a zero balance at the end of the 2010-11 financial year. The gross budget for MACLS in the current financial year is approaching £3million.
- 7.3 Skills Funding Agency expectations of income from individual learners and employers – at present this expectation sits at 50% contribution but there are signs that fewer qualifications may in future fall into the priority category for public funding and therefore this will require significant changes to the provision offered by MACLS (to meet funding requirements).
- 7.4 There are no legal implications contained within this report.

8. Recommendation

- 8.1 The committee is asked to consider and note the work of the Medway Adult and Community Learning Service.

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Background papers

MACLS Service Plan